

# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

NOVEMBER 1992

ONE DOLLAR







I once fell in love with a tapir. Granted, I didn't know much about these black and white, long-snouted animals that inhabit the swampy forests of Burma and Sumatra. But, every day on my lunch hour while working at the San Diego Zoo, I would walk down the asphalt pathway past the hippopotamuses, the flamingos, and the cockatoos preening on their perches, to the fence surrounding the Malay tapir and her watermelon-striped baby.

Not many tourists stopped to gaze at the tapirs like they did the baboons or the polar bears. After all, tapirs didn't squeal and hoot like gibbons, or make strange thumping noises in their chests like emus. About the most interesting thing you could say about tapirs is that they were dimly related to a rhinoceros.

Still, I loved them. They were peaceful and quiet creatures, seemingly unaffected by captivity and curious humans watching them. Sharing my lunch hour with them was a restful respite from the tourists, lovesick peacocks, and screaming lemurs.

The youthful and talented wildlife artist Lee Baskerville, however, once told me that a zoo animal is a poor subject for a painting. They are without the inexplicable spirit he tells me he sees in animals in the wild, and which he tries to capture on canvas.

I wondered if this was really true. We all want to believe that wild is better, and that a domestic life can't hold a candle to a life without bounds. On the other hand, I know of a parrot that lives in Florida and keels over backwards, throw its feet up in the air and closes its eyes if you pretend to shoot him with your finger and yell "Bang, bang!" Then he jumps up and cackles at you. How can you beat that?

There is a rather famous bird banding site on the tip of Virginia's Eastern Shore where over 100 volunteers descend each fall to band tiny warblers, hawks, falcons, and any other migratory bird on its way south for the winter that follows the natural funnel down

the Eastern Shore and across the Bay. Most people who love birds know of this operation, since it's been going on for nearly 30 years, now. But, it's always surprised me that the same people go back there year after year, spending hard-earned vacations to band the thousands of birds coming through. Isn't it repetitive? Isn't it boring? If you've seen one yellow-rumped warbler, haven't you seen them all?

The problem is, it's hard for us to remember that seeing wildlife up close on their own turf is different. Unlike a nature television show that loses its charm after the first showing, real life never does. In truth, anytime that we encounter life on its own terms, be it a live concert instead of a CD, a play instead of a movie, or an animal in the wild, it is unforgettable.

It's also terribly hard to describe. Words fail us, so we try to use pictures. But, photographs can't capture that spirit, nor can a painting—unless, perhaps, we have experienced the picture ourselves, and can remember. Then, perhaps the words, the photographs, the artwork can prompt a feeling or a memory. But without the personal experience, it doesn't work.

At the Kiptopeke banding station, something stirs inside when you hold a bright-eyed fluff of feathers in your hand, marvelling that this tiny bird has seen more places in the sky and on earth than you will ever see.

When a Cooper's hawk is captured in a mist net, untangled and held angrily screaming by its yellow feet, we all hold our breath in awe. It's not something you planned, something you anticipated feeling. Of course, we've all heard that historically these predators were the property only of kings, that their feathers adorned only the greatest of chiefs, but so what? Those are only words. You must see a hawk unfettered and captured for but a moment to understand.

There is, undeniably, a difference in the spirits of living things. It is something but awkwardly talked about,

and never very well. The words trail behind the feelings. So, when Lee Baskerville said a wild thing is not the same in a cage as it is the wild, I now know what he means.

I spent the day at Kiptopeke with two young girls, on holiday from elementary school, as they learned how to gently release small warblers from a mist net. Amy and Sarah turned to their mother and swore they would never leave the place. They had held those tiny journeyers in their small hands and smoothed their feathers. They had been in the presence of a hawk that dared us to raise a hand to within biting range. They had a brush, I believe, with some feeling of the wild.

And so, indeed, I believe this is one argument that cannot be disputed when talking about saving this species or another. "What good is it?" people ask. So many things seem so much more important to us than an animal whose paths never cross our own. And, besides, we can see these animals in zoos if nowhere else.

Well, yes, I'm certain some young child has since fallen in love with my San Diego tapirs. However, it is also true I recently found out that people in South America consider tapirs to be most ill-tempered, cantankerous sorts, and they are best loved when found on the dinner table. Of course, one could take consolation in the fact that a tapir from Colombia couldn't possibly have the same temperament as a tapir from Malaysia. It's all a matter of spirit, I suppose.



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*Cover:* Learn how to add deer calls to your hunting bag of tricks this season; see page 14 for details.  
Photo by Bill Lea.



*Stocking pen-raised birds is not the way to increase the number of quail on your property; see page 8 to find out why. Photo by Lloyd B. Hill.*

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*Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources*



# Home Sweet

*James Edmunds is proving that landowners can share their farms with wildlife and still pay the bills.*

by Steve Ausband

I had almost forgotten how people in Virginia and the Carolinas liked to name their land. My grandmother's farm had been called Century Oak, after the huge old white oak tree that stood in the middle of the farmyard, ringed by woodsheds, barns, and smokehouses. I suppose the tree was much more than a century old—it was as big around as a Buick—but I always liked the name and thought it appropriate. So it didn't surprise me to find that all the farms on James Edmunds' property have names, or that the places seem to fit what they are called, the way people sometimes look like their names. Folks who have always lived on city lots may find the idea odd, but it makes sense when you have a love for the land,



and a pride in it. I met Edmunds at Elm Hill.

Elm Hill is a thousand acres of gently rolling, Halifax County farm-and-woodland. The Elm Hill house that is (or anyway was) the heart of the farm is a brick building, finished in 1842, perched on a knoll and surrounded by a lawn that slopes away into woods. There are, of course, elm trees around the house. Just down the road is the farm called Riverside, and beyond that Creekside, and a few miles away the house and farm where James lives, Bellevue, just outside the little town of Halifax.

Names. Only people who love the land will give it a name, passing the name with the land on to their children and their children's children. A man tends to take care of things that

have a name.

What struck me was the way James Edmunds has set about taking care of his 6,500 acres. I met him one day at Averett when he happened to drop by my office, and we soon were talking about deer hunting and quail habitat and game management. The conversation ended with an invitation to deer hunt the following Saturday, and, when we weren't actually hunting, to "take a look at some of the little things" he was doing to improve wildlife habitat. I hunted with him several times that season, and I saw a lot of game—deer, turkeys, ducks, quail. It took a couple of trips for me to realize exactly what else I was seeing: an immensely productive game management program combined with a successful farming





James Edmunds runs a successful farming and wildlife management operation on his 6,500 acres in Halifax County. Above: Bellevue, the Edmunds' home. Inset: James Edmunds. Above right: James Edmunds has interspersed pine plantings with brushy thickets, grassy meadows, and wildlife food patches (top). He has declared war on fescue and has converted much of it on his land to alfalfa (bottom); photos by Dwight Dyke.

operation. I made several more trips after the hunting season to find out exactly how he does it.

James sells a little wheat and corn, but the farm income derives mainly from beef cattle and pine trees. He has about 1800 acres in pasture, and much of the rest of the property is given over to silviculture. Neither cattle-raising nor tree-farming is always thought of as particularly conducive to wildlife habitat, but a systematic program of wildlife plantings, crop management, and careful, long-range planning has made the Edmunds property a wildlife haven.

"On some farms," James told me, "I have just about gotten rid of the fescue. A few years ago, everybody around here planted fescue for pastures and hay, but it is terrible for wildlife. Nothing eats it but cows, and it makes such a thick ground cover that quail can't walk through it." We were driving down a farm road, with hardwoods on one side and a big, green field on the other. I looked carefully at the field. Alfalfa.

"We can get several hay cuttings off our alfalfa fields in a season, and the birds and animals love it. Especially the deer. You can see deer in that field almost any evening." Other fields had orchard grass, clover, soybeans, wheat—anything but fescue. Clover was everywhere, all of it the ladino white that is a favorite of wildlife managers.

Monocultures of even-aged pine trees have sometimes been described as wildlife deserts. They provide pretty good cover but very little in the way of nutrition; the abundant variety of foodstuffs favored by deer and turkeys is always absent. But on the rolling, pine-covered hills of the farm called Riverside, the pines are broken up by brushy thickets, grassy meadows, strips of perennials such as clover, vetch, Korean lespedeza, and shrub lespedeza. There are also feeder strips of wheat, grain sorghum, and soybeans.

"The wheat makes an excellent planting when you mix it with clover," James said. "Clover takes a while to get started, and the wheat comes up early and gives the new clover some cover. Deer and turkeys love winter wheat, the seed heads

make plenty of food for birds later, and by the time fall rolls around the clover is established as the primary wildlife food." Milo and millets are also used in some of the strips, as are soybeans, though "the deer tend to work on the beans pretty hard. Some of the other stuff lasts better."



We looked at some seedlings of VA-70 shrub lespedeza James had set out the previous season. Most of it was doing well. He had tried a new variety of peas as an experiment but was still undecided on them. Experience has made him lean toward wheat, clover, beans, milo and vetch in the feeder strips, and wheat and alfalfa in the hay fields.

How much does it cost? I had to wonder this out loud, because I knew that every hour spent dragging a disc over a feeder patch and every bag of seed or fertilizer represented dollars out of the farmer's pocket. It's a lot of trouble and expense, being steward to wildlife on 6,500 acres.

"Hunting pays for almost all of it," James said. "I allow a little hunting on a fee basis for deer, quail, turkey, and ducks. Hunting rights to the rest of the game on the farm are sold on a



very limited basis. I only want a few hunters on a 1,000-acre area at any one time. So everybody has a quality hunt, with no crowding and no pressure, and I make just enough money at it to keep on putting in wildlife plantings and sheltering the thickets and wetlands and other highly productive habitats."

I toured a couple of the wetlands, including a 40-acre beaver swamp and a strip of sometimes-flooded land along the Dan River. The river-bottom land has millet planted in patches, waiting for the floods of winter. During previous winters, James has seen mallards by the hun-

*Edmunds plants millet in some river bottom land for waterfowl (right). A beaver pond on his land provides a resting place for waterfowl (bottom), while a clover strip provides food for deer and small game (below); photos by Dwight Dyke.*



dreds there. A 40-acre beaver pond doesn't even need a patch of millet. All it needs is to be within viewing distance of a duck. James likes the swamps not only as waterfowl sanctuaries, but as cover for deer and other game as well.

He showed me a brochure he had had made, outlining the various kinds of hunting opportunities on the farms and describing very briefly some of the habitat projects. The title page of the brochure said, "Down to Earth Conservation and Hunting Club." I found the choice of names interesting.

"This is a farming operation, not a hunting preserve," James said, "and anyway, the primary purpose is conservation. Hunting is just a very effective way of providing the financing for the conservation. I sell a few deer and turkey leases each year, a





very few permits to hunt ducks in the swamps and lowlands, and I take people quail hunting. The hunting is high-quality, the hunters help me manage the resource, and the income allows me to improve the habitat for every kind of animal and bird on the farm."

I asked James how he had made his decisions on what to plant, what strips to leave uncut, how to manage all this land for both profit and wildlife.

"Trial and error, partly," he said. "And reading. I would get ideas out of magazines and try them out. My father, Paul Edmunds, got all this started about 15 years ago. After he died in 1988, I wanted to carry on with it. He loved to hunt, and he always maintained that a well-managed farm could produce both a profit and a lot of wildlife. After awhile, neighbors would come and ask him how he did it. He was the one who re-

silver glint of the river in the distance. "I like thinking about the first people to farm this land, and about what they saw then," James told me. "I would like to imagine that if one of them could come back now and walk around on these farms and do a little hunting, he would approve of what I'm doing. He'd feel—I don't know—at home." I nodded, remembering a matted and framed copy of a land grant I had seen at Elm Hill. It was from George II, "by the grace of God of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith," and it granted to one Nicholas Edmunds some 2,435 acres of land along the Dan River. The date was April 15, 1754—almost 240 years ago. I figured James had a pretty good fantasy: old Nicholas would still love the place. □

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**Editor's note:** If you are interested in making your land a productive place for both people and wildlife, you don't have to start without help. There is plenty of free technical assistance available, and to start you off, be sure to sit down with next month's Virginia Wildlife, which will be devoted to exploring the Virginia Department of Forestry's stewardship program on private lands.



Wildlife is thriving on Edmunds' farm where he has managed to combine a productive beef cattle and pine forest operation with wildlife management. Edmunds plants VA-70 shrub lespedeza for wildlife food and cover (left and inset) along with grain sorghum and soybeans (below left); photos by Dwight Dyke. Below right: Wild turkey; photo by Carl Herndon.

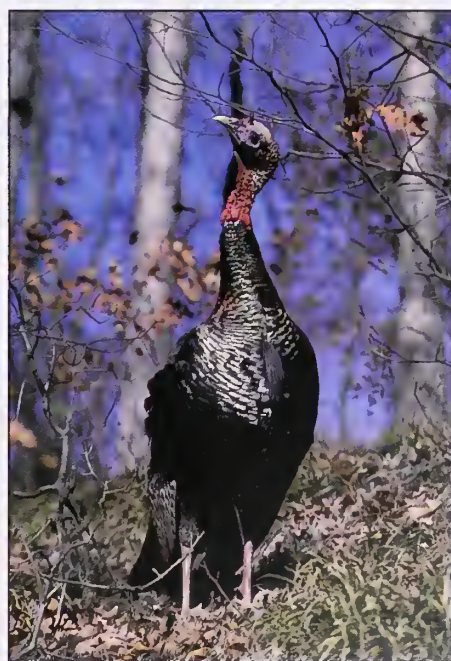


ally got me started in this."

"One final question," I said. "You're young, and you've done a lot in a short time. What are you most proud of? What gives you the most satisfaction?" We rode in silence for a few minutes while James thought. Finally he spoke.

"Continuing what my father started on this land," he said finally. "Making the place productive as a farm and as a place for wildlife. That's what I'm most proud of."

We drove over the black-top roads between farms in the waning afternoon, admiring stands of oaks and hickories, rolling fields, the







Here Today and





Studies have shown that pen-raised bobwhites survive poorly in the wild, with a life span of only 10.8 days. *Opposite and above: Bobwhites; photos by Maslowski.*

by Mike Fies

It's a familiar scene, repeated many times every year throughout the fields and farmlands of Virginia. Well-intentioned sportsmen and landowners, concerned about declining numbers of bobwhite quail, decide to take action and give Gentlemen Bob a boost. They visit a local game bird production facility and choose a dozen or so healthy-looking quail. While driving home, they contemplate which fencerow or weed thicket will serve as the best release site. The whole family is rounded up and everyone gathers around the transport cage in great anticipation of the quail release.

Slowly, the door to the cage is opened and the hesitant bobwhites exit single file and fly off into the brush. Everyone smiles. A covey will soon become established on the old home place and the familiar sound of the bobwhite whistle will once again ring through the air on those calm spring mornings. Eventually, these "seed birds" will produce broods of their own. Soon there will be plenty of quail for hunting, dog training, or just plain watching.

Wrong. In reality, the end result will be a big disappointment. In the next few days or even weeks to follow, a few half-starved survivors

might be seen wandering around in a feeble-looking condition. Soon, their numbers will dwindle to zero, and nothing else will be heard from the little covey of bobwhites that looked so healthy just a month or so earlier. Speculation will abound concerning the fate of the stocked birds. Perhaps they're over on the neighbor's property. Maybe they're out there somewhere and we're just not seeing them anymore. Maybe we need to try again next year?

It's a natural tendency to be optimistic, and not to want to believe that the attractive little game birds either starved to death or are in the belly of your neighbor's cat. Chances are, however, that all of the birds have indeed perished and wishful thinking will not change that result. It was nobody's fault. The well-intentioned release was doomed from the start, a mission with almost no chance of success. Despite the unsubstantiated claims of a few, there is not a single shred of scientific evidence to suggest that releasing pen-raised bobwhites will increase wild quail populations. In fact, recent studies suggest that releasing pen-raised quail is harmful to wild bobwhites and may even reduce native populations.

### *An Exercise in Futility*

To contend that pen-raised game birds survive poorly in the wild is not exactly an earth-shattering news bulletin. For more than 50 years, wildlife researchers have documented numerous failed attempts to supple-

# and Gone Tomorrow

*Stocking pen-raised bobwhites in an effort to improve wild quail populations is a misguided practice, proven to be a waste of time, effort, and expense. Additionally, new studies are finding that the stocking of pen-raised quail may actually harm wild bobwhites.*



ment wild quail populations with pen-reared stock. In general, it was found that released birds lacked the innate behavioral attributes necessary for survival in the "real world." Most artificially raised quail were unable to adapt to changes in food, temperature, moisture, and the presence of natural predators. Many types of predators, most of which were rarely capable of capturing a wild adult bobwhite, were quick to capitalize on the easy pickings provided by comparatively witless pen-raised stock. Even when great care was taken to raise "quality" birds in a semi-natural environment, the result almost always was the same.

Consider the state of Oklahoma, where more than 83,000 banded bobwhites were released from 1940 to 1942. During this three-year period, only 946 (1.1%) of the bands were returned. Almost all of these were recovered during the hunting season immediately following release (2-3 months). While some band recoveries undoubtedly went unreported, it seems doubtful that the numbers were high enough to significantly affect study results.

Even when a \$1.00 reward (an ample chunk of change in the 1940's) was offered for each band returned in a study done in one of Virginia's neighboring states, only 152 bands from 13,500 quail (also 1.1 %) were recovered. Many other states also documented similar experiences. By 1950, most states involved in quail propagation efforts either abandoned their game farms or severely curtailed production. Virginia finally ceased its quail farming operations altogether in the 1950's.

Despite these research findings, the exact length of time that pen-reared quail survived and the actual causes of mortality were largely unknown, since carcasses were rarely found. The recent development of radio-telemetry techniques (small transmitters attached to individual birds), however, helped answer these questions. One of the best telemetry studies evaluating the success of pen-raised quail releases was recently conducted at the Tall Timbers Research Station in Florida.



In this study, 28 pen-raised and 28 wild female quail were monitored from May through September for each of two years. During this brief time period, the mortality rate for the 28 pen-raised quail was 100% (see Figure 1). The average life span for these domestic birds was only 10.8 days! In contrast, only four of the 28 wild birds (14%) died during this same period. Among the pen-raised quail, 68 percent of the mortality was attributed to mammalian predators (most likely foxes), 18% was due to avian predators (hawks and owls), and 14% to unknown predators. For the wild quail, three of the four quail that died were killed by avian predators, and one by an unknown predator. According to the researchers, the pen-raised quail were reluctant to fly for a period of at least one week following release and were more easily captured by mammalian predators than were wild birds. It took almost four weeks in the field before pen-raised quail developed the flight characteristics of their wild counterparts.

Another interesting result was that none of the pen-raised hens attempted to nest, even though all hens that survived more than two days were seen with wild males. Granted, most pen-raised hens never had a chance to hatch off a brood (a minimum of 40 days would be required) because they succumbed to predation shortly after release. But five pen-raised hens did survive more than 40 days, and none were ever observed incubating eggs. These pen-raised quail appeared to lack the inherent behavioral characteristics necessary to successfully reproduce in the wild. The average clutch size for wild hens, however, was 13.5 eggs with an average hatching success of 97%. Since all of the pen-raised hens were seen with wild males and no young were produced, it seems reasonable to assume that competition between wild and pen-raised hens for mates could result in fewer young quail produced in wild populations.

Even with all the evidence that suggests stocking quail to be an exercise in futility, interest in releasing





*Because pen-raised quail are reluctant to fly for at least one week following release, they are more easily captured by predators such as the gray fox (top; photo by David Vinyard) and the great horned owl (above; photo by Larry R. Ditto).*

pen-raised bobwhites appears to be increasing among sportsmen and land managers. Populations of native quail continue to nosedive throughout the Southeast and quail enthusiasts are desperate for a possible solution to turn the situation around. In many areas, native quail are too scarce to adequately train a bird dog, run a field trial, or provide a

quality hunting experience. As a result, pen-reared quail are viewed by some as a less desirable yet necessary substitute for wild quail in habitats where bobwhite numbers are low. Even among those who don't expect the stocked quail to survive, there is the general assumption that the release of pen-raised birds is a harmless practice. This assumption, however, is being questioned by an increasing number of biologists.

In 1990, 51 biologists from 11 Southeastern states were concerned enough to convene a special meeting to discuss the potential impacts of releasing pen-raised quail on wild populations. The major objectives of this workshop were to review existing and ongoing research on the ecological interactions between pen-raised and wild bobwhites, and to recommend management techniques that would minimize potential risks to wild quail populations. The questions raised were, at the very least, a frightening challenge to the premise that releasing pen-raised birds "won't hurt anything."

### ***Potential Problems for Wild Bobwhites?***

One of the most significant and potentially disastrous effects that releasing pen-raised quail could have on wild bobwhite populations is the

spread of disease. Pen-raised quail that are infected with certain diseases have the ability to quickly transfer these diseases to entire bobwhite coveys. Avian pox is the probably the most serious of these diseases, with infection rates in some wild populations reported at levels as high as 40 percent. This disease is frequently found in pen-raised birds and is commonly spread into wild populations by mosquitoes and by contact with infected birds. The scabby or wart-like lesions typical of pox are usually formed on the feet and legs, or in and around the eyes, nose, or mouth. Lesions in the head region are often fatal, inhibiting feeding or sight capabilities. As a result, wild quail infected with avian pox are more likely to die from predation than uninfected birds. Many other diseases of pen-raised quail are also important, but it is unknown how likely these diseases are transferred to wild birds. Wild turkeys and grouse are susceptible to some of these diseases, particularly one called histomoniasis or "blackhead disease." Pen-raised quail often harbor histomoniasis without ill effects. Mortality for wild turkeys and grouse exposed to the disease, however, can exceed 75 percent. The importance of releasing healthy game birds into the wild can not be overemphasized.

Another issue worthy of discussion, but for which almost no information exists, is the possibility that wild gene pool may be diluted by matings between pen-raised and wild quail. Biologists refer to this phenomenon as "genetic pollution." Even though the vast majority of pen-raised quail do not survive long enough to breed, the potential still exists for genetic crosses, especially in areas where repeated releases are the norm. Documentation of successful breeding by pen-raised quail is rare, but has been reported by some land managers. Since many strains of domestic quail have been bred against "broodiness" (and for maximum egg production), offspring that are produced by pen-raised quail are likely to be less fit for survival than broods produced by wild quail. Over time, repeated crossings of pen-raised and wild quail could conceiv-



ably have adverse cumulative effects on the genetic integrity of wild populations. Studies are presently underway to identify a genetic "marker" that can be used to determine the extent to which wild gene pools have become "polluted" by pen-raised stock.

Researchers are also concerned that stocking pen-raised quail may alter the natural balance between predators and prey. Predators are known to concentrate in areas where bird releases occur, because of the sudden abundance of less vigorous and easily captured prey. This concentration of predators can have detrimental impacts on wild birds by increasing the likelihood of predator-quail contact. Preliminary results from an ongoing research project in Alabama supports this hypothesis. In this study, pen-raised and wild quail were radio-tagged and monitored in an area where domestic quail were released. A "control" group of radio-tagged wild quail was also followed in an area distant from the release site. Somewhat surprisingly, researchers found that both the pen-raised and wild birds in the release area experienced identical and massive mortality (85%) during the December through April monitoring period. By comparison, the wild quail far from the release site had less than half the mortality rate (40%) of the treatment birds. Apparently, the influx of predators into the release area after the pen-raised birds were stocked put severe pressure on the wild birds inhabiting the area. Wild quail outside of the release location experienced more normal predation rates. This interesting research project will continue for the next several years with additional study sites being monitored.

The potential impacts of releasing pen-raised quail on the social structure of wild populations are also worthy of discussion. Nobody really knows what happens to wild quail after large numbers of pen-raised birds are dumped into their home range. Do they abandon the area? Is there competition for food or mates? Biologists do know that interactions occur. Both banded pen-raised quail and wild bobwhites have reportedly

been shot from the same covey rise. Pairing of pen-raised hens and wild cocks has also been documented. Radio-tagged pen-raised quail and wild bobwhites have been observed roosting together. Considering the importance of social structure to the gregarious bobwhite, it seems likely that the release of pen-raised birds could have some effect on wild quail behavior.

Because of these potential deleterious effects, state wildlife agencies and some conservation organizations (i.e. Quail Unlimited) cannot recommend or condone the practice of releasing pen-raised game birds. Instead, responsible habitat management is seen as the only long-term solution to declining wild quail populations. Undoubtedly, this article will upset some folks in the game bird and shooting preserve industry. Granted, pen-raised bird operations do provide hunting and dog-training opportunities for those who may not have had them otherwise. Some might even contend that shooting stocked quail may reduce the hunt-

ing pressure on wild quail. Also, habitat on shooting preserves is often managed in ways that are beneficial to a variety of wildlife species, including quail. Certainly quail are better off than if these areas are developed into subdivisions or shopping malls. These benefits aside, I can think of few other values that the propagation and release of pen-reared quail provide. And I can find absolutely no reason to be optimistic that the practice of stocking pen-reared quail will ever be a useful technique for supplementing declining wild bobwhite populations.

Realizing that some people will insist upon stocking quail no matter what I write in this article, one can only hope that proper precautions will be taken to minimize risks to native populations. At the very least, responsible individuals should make *absolutely certain* that released birds are healthy and disease-free. Quail should only be purchased from reputable dealers actively involved in disease prevention programs. If possible, birds should only be released in



*Improving habitat means more bobwhites; photo by Lloyd B. Hill.*



areas that are devoid of native bobwhites. If wild quail already occur in the vicinity, carefully planned habitat improvements will undoubtedly yield a much higher return than a shortsighted stocking program. If you've already tried the habitat approach without apparent success, chances are that you did something wrong or that you didn't allow enough time for native quail to respond favorably. Quail populations that are struggling often have few surplus birds to disperse into new territories. Eventually, however, usually in one to three years, wild bobwhites will find these areas and should prosper. Contrary to what a few "doubting Thomases" might tell you, habitat improvement programs *do* work. There is a voluminous amount of scientific information to support this approach, compared to only a few anecdotal reports that describe successful releases of pen-raised quail.

Although rarely feasible, there is one other alternative for reestablishing quail in unoccupied habitats that

deserves mention. It may be possible to successfully relocate wild quail into unoccupied territories, much like has been accomplished with wild turkey and ruffed grouse. In a much publicized study conducted in Florida, biologists successfully relocated three partial bobwhite coveys and established three new coveys in the release areas. Prior to release, habitat quality on the areas was believed to be suitable, yet native quail were seldom encountered there. Based on these results, the researchers suggested that covey relocation might be a feasible management technique for filling temporary voids created by excessive shooting, adverse weather, or predation on *managed quail lands*. It must be stressed, however, that quail relocation will not serve as a "quick fix" for unsuitable habitats.

Why then, is the Game Department not embarking upon a massive statewide quail relocation effort? Very simply, because the funds and manpower necessary to begin such an initiative are presently unavailable. Trapping and relocating quail is extremely costly and time-consuming. Also, the chances for success are questionable. Consider the experience of West Virginia, where biologists recently launched a three-year project to introduce wild Kansas quail into unoccupied habitats. Two years into the project, 63 quail were relocated (all in one area) and only one covey was successfully established. Estimated cost of relocating the quail was about \$4000, or about \$63 per bird stocked. The cost per bird *established* is many times higher. North Carolina also experimented, on a very limited scale, with relocated wild birds and had no evidence of success. Obviously, much still needs to be learned before this technique can be used effectively by wildlife managers.

### *Think Before You Stock*

Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to the problems presently faced by quail populations in the Southeast. Changing land use patterns and intensive agriculture have rendered countless acres of formerly

suitable quail habitat useless to bobwhites. An increased public commitment towards responsible land management and the establishment of financial incentives for wildlife habitat improvements are needed to reverse the situation. Resurrecting game farms and subscribing to the "raise 'em yourself" school of wildlife management will do nothing but divert needed funds away from legitimate conservation efforts. Money spent on releasing pen-raised quail cannot also be used to improve habitat. The delusion that stocking domestic quail will somehow benefit or supplement wild populations is an antiquated fantasy that has absolutely no scientific foundation, despite more than 50 years of trial and error experimentation. Quite the contrary, biologists are now becoming increasingly concerned about the potential negative impacts that result from pen-raised game bird releases.

So, if you are contemplating or are currently involved in a quail release program, you should ask yourself several questions. First, what are your objectives? Second, is the release of pen-raised quail the most effective means of accomplishing your objectives? And finally, are you willing to risk the health and welfare of wild quail populations near the release site?

If you are training a young bird dog or running a commercial shooting preserve, you may be able to rationalize the use of pen-raised birds. But if your intent is to bolster native populations of bobwhites, you might as well quit before you ever get started. The hard-learned lessons of the "propagation era" do not deserve to be repeated. As the old Chinese proverb goes: "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me." Those quail enthusiasts who are truly committed to bringing back "Bob" will find little reward in raising and releasing pen-raised fox chow. Instead, as responsible sportsmen and conservationists they will work intelligently and patiently towards a habitat management solution. □

*Mike Fies is the small game research biologist for the Department.*







# The Call of the Wild

by Gerald Almy

Jim Clay knew there were big deer on the small parcel of forest he was hunting in Frederick County. He had seen their tracks, their huge oval scrapes and fresh bark-stripped rubs on pines. He even got a good glimpse of one of the heavy-antlered bucks the day before. There were three deer traveling in a group, two small bucks and one large one that dwarfed its companions. But at 40 yards and a bad angle, he didn't want to risk a shot with his bow.

The next afternoon Clay was on stand again, but this time he had a secret weapon in his coat pocket—a Wayne Carlton deer grunt call. When the buck hadn't shown itself by late in the day and light was rapidly waning, Clay grunted fast and loud on the call. "At first it sounded like a man walking," he said later. "But I knew no one should be in there hunting. I raised my bow and waited, thinking it was the buck. Seconds later the deer strode into view and just kept coming towards me. Finally

he angled slightly. At 13 yards I took the shot."

It was the largest whitetail Clay had ever killed in a lifetime of deer hunting, with a heavy 9-point rack and a field dressed weight of 176 pounds. That buck, a 4 1/2 year old animal, plus numerous other deer Jim, myself and other hunters have called in, should dispel one of the greatest myths surrounding deer calling—something many readers are probably wondering about from the outset of this article. Doesn't deer calling just work in Texas? The answer is an emphatic *no*. Deer calling, done properly, at the right time and location, can produce results anywhere that whitetails are found, and that includes Virginia.

The second question probably on many people's minds is why should I try calling deer? Stand hunting, drives and still hunting work for most Old Dominion big game hunters. Why not stick with tactics that produce?

My answer is simple: it keeps the sport interesting and fresh. So you've mastered stand hunting, and drives

and still hunting work well for you at times. That seems all the more reason to broaden one's knowledge of woodsmanship and animal behavior by learning a new and unique hunting method. It won't be a tactic you'll want to employ all the time, or even most of the time. Rather, calling deer should be looked upon on as simply one of a variety of strategies you can turn to in the deliciously difficult task of trying to outwit whitetails.

But, be forewarned. Once you've grunted, bleated or rattled up a whitetail buck and had him come racing or slinking into your calls like a big tom turkey comes strutting into yelps in spring, you may find it harder and harder to go back to other hunting methods. No thrill in hunting is greater than calling in a trophy whitetail buck. Try your best, though, not to overdo it. Use the technique when conditions are appropriate and you'll find it a valuable method to have at your fingertips.

Calling is an especially good technique to use when hunting pressure is light. This makes it an ideal tactic for bowhunting, for the early muz-





Antler rattling, which simulates bucks fighting over a doe, can be effective just before, during, or after the peak of the rut to lure bucks into your stand. *Above:* photo by Lloyd B. Hill. *Opposite:* Whitetail buck; photo by Bill Lea.

zleloader season, and for hunting on weekdays and late in the season when pressure in the woods is reduced.

Calling can be used on public lands, but is best reserved for the situations described above, or in areas where you can hike in far from the road and get away from most other hunters. Ideally, it should be employed on lightly hunted private lands where you know who else is in the woods and know you'll have a large chunk of land to hunt on your own. For safety reasons, as well as a lack of effectiveness, never call on crowded public lands on opening day or weekends.

Calling is also most likely to produce in areas where the buck-to-doe ratio is fairly even. Virginia has a closer sex balance in their herds than many states, but still some areas are better than others. You'll do best when you find managed herds with a good buck-to-doe ratio. The reason is that if there are six or seven does milling around for every male deer, bucks have little reason to fight or

show competitive-ness in coming to a doe or buck call because there are so many does readily available.

A final quality to look for is an area with an abundance of middle or older age-class bucks. Again, well-managed private lands or remote sections of public land are the best bets. Older deer are more likely to want to display their dominance and fight with intruders in their territory.

You can also up your odds by calling when the weather is optimum. Avoid calling on blistering hot days or when it's so windy that bucks are skittish and not likely to hear your calls. Pick light or no wind days, with cool to

cold temperatures. Whether it's sunny or cloudy doesn't seem to matter.

Time of day, however, is important. I've grunted and rattled up bucks at high noon in Virginia. Generally, though, the first two and last two hours of daylight are prime times.

Deer can be called with a variety of sounds. Some calls just stop them in their tracks momentarily. Others lure them in with the promise of a doe, others with the urge to fight. Some calls just seem to say in deer language, "Hello, how you are you doing?" Here's a look at some of the most important deer calls.

**Snorts.** Snort calls are among the oldest on the market. Deer use a variety of snorts in their language. Most hunters have heard alarm snorts when they tried to get into a stand in the predawn and stumbled upon deer. Other snorts are used as a form of inquiry, if something has aroused the animal's curiosity, but not actually spooked it. This type of call can be used to stop a deer that may be mov-

ing away. It won't keep it there for long, though, so be ready with your bow or gun when you use a snort.

**Fawn Calls.** Fawns make a variety of calls that can attract deer. The first is the bleat or meow. It's a soft, high-toned sound made when the fawn is near its mother, often when it's hungry. This is a good call to use if you're bow hunting or hunting where antlerless deer are legal. It works best early in the season when fawns are young and demand lots of attention. Occasionally bucks come to this call, but they are usually young ones and often come in following does responding to it.

Another major call fawns make is the distress cry. This is an eerie noise to hear in the woods. It sounds something like a human infant shrieking and crying. It can go on for a long time and deer hear it from a long ways off. This call is mainly useful for bringing in does, but if you use it during the rut, bucks may come into it or follow does in.

**Doe Calls.** Does use a variety of vocalizations but two of the most common are the bleat and grunt. A doe bleat is higher pitched than a grunt and rises in the middle, something like a sheep's call—*knee-eeeh*. It's often used along with the grunt,

*Calling whitetails is a new tactic to add to your hunting repertoire this year. The key is to remember to use calls sparingly and only in the right situations.*

which is lower in tone and apparently seems to say to other deer—"Hi, here I am. Come on over." These calls, used separately or alternating with each other, are great for calling in bucks as well as other does. A variety of commercial brands are available and most are simple to use just by blowing air through them. Listen to tapes of real does, then try several brands until you feel you have obtained the most realistic sound possible.



**Buck grunts.** These calls are perhaps the most popular of all among Virginia hunters, and for good reason. Bucks during the rut, which starts during archery season and peaks during muzzleloader and general firearms seasons, are anxious to chase does and engage other bucks they think might have does with them.

Bucks make a deep, guttural grunt that can be used in a non-aggressive way, to say sort of, "Here I am. What's going on?" or "Where are you?" These should be kept soft and short in length. Make two to five calls, then wait 10 to 15 minutes before repeating. Louder, longer grunts become more aggressive in nature and are often used during fights. This is the aggravated grunt and tends to rise in pitch in the middle. It's often used in conjunction with rattling, but can also bring deer in by itself. It's used by bucks in a fighting mood or those interested in challenging intruders in their territory.

You can change the tone of grunts by partly closing the end of the tube or by turning it back against your body, to muffle the sound. You can also aim the tube in different directions. A method which call manufacturer Wayne Carlton has used with great effectiveness of late is to call continuously 30 to 45 seconds, moving the call in different directions and working it in and out like an accordion, to give the effect of a number of deer milling about in an area. This is the call Jim Clay was using when he lured in the big 9-pointer in Frederick County last October.

**Antler Rattling.** This is the loudest sound you can make to call deer and is done by clashing a pair of antlers together to simulate two bucks fighting. It is primarily done just before, during or after the peak of the rut, and gives the effect of two bucks battling over a doe ready to breed. Other bucks come into the sound, hoping to

win the female.

You can cut off the antlers from a 6 to 12-point buck and use them for rattling or if you find a fresh pair of sheds that still have a sharp sound



*Deer calls, like the assortment pictured above, must be used judiciously throughout the season. From the doe calls to the buck grunts and antler rattling, each technique must be understood before it can be used effectively; photo by Gerald Almy.*

when clashed together, use those. A variety of synthetic rattling "horns" are also sold, some of which work surprisingly well. Avoid using too large a pair of antlers, since this can intimidate smaller bucks from coming in if they feel they are no match for the bucks they think they hear fighting. If you get a good pair of rattling antlers, treat them with linseed oil every year to retain their sound. You can also saw off or file down the sharp tips on the rack, to avoid injuring your hands while rattling. Wearing gloves also helps protect your hands. Use an orange pack to carry them in to avoid being mistaken for a buck by careless hunters.

Make a rattling sequence by clashing the horns together, then rubbing them back and forth and knocking the tines against each other. You can make a sequence for five to 30 or more seconds. Every whitetail fight is different. There is no set pattern you must follow. You can even kick a few rocks, rake the horns against trees or scuffle leaves to really simulate a knock-out deer fight.

After you rattle, put down the antlers and pick up your bow or firearm, then wait. Chances are the deer will circle and approach from the downwind side—but not always.

Some bucks come slinking in quietly and slowly. Others come charging in. Be prepared for any type of approach. Some does may come in, too, so if bucks are the only legal game, be sure you check for antlers before shooting. If nothing comes in after ten or 15 minutes, rattle again, then wait a while longer before moving to another location. You can also use rattling in conjunction with a few grunts on a tube call to produce a more authentic "buck fight" in sound.

If loud rattling doesn't produce, try soft sparring. Just tick the antlers together lightly and rub them without much pressure. This is more of a social, passive behavior.

Bucks do it seemingly just to interact on a friendly basis. It starts while the antlers are still in velvet and continues well after the rut. This sound isn't heard as far as loud rattling, so don't cover as much ground when you walk between sequences. Sparring is particularly effective for bringing in young and medium-aged deer, but can also lure in trophy bucks. It's best reserved for days with little or no wind.

Don't expect deer calling to be a magical hunting method that always produces. Some days you'll strike out with it, just like with any tactic. But it is a technique that can yield excitement like few others and at times lures in trophy class whitetails. Like any method, it should not be one you turn to every time you enter the woods, but rather a tactic to keep in your hunting repertoire and use when conditions are just right.

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# A Prized Possession

by  
Steve Ausband



*The first  
shotgun  
is a gift  
that will  
never be  
forgotten.*

*Here are  
some tips  
to help you  
choose a  
worthy  
treasure  
for your  
youngster.*



**A**

lmost every good hunter I know remembers his or her first gun. Each one knows it was more than an assembly of hardwood and blued steel, too; it was an admission ticket and a token of trust, and it carried with it a tremendous responsibility. No matter how homely or ill-shooting a piece it might have been, it was proof that the young shooters had earned the trust of adults they respected, and it was a way by which they taught themselves more about the outdoors than they ever could have found in books.

My own first shotgun was a dreadful 16-gauge double of undetermined make, with cylinder bores, a cracked stock, and a left barrel that only fired occasionally. I was very proud of it, but not so proud that I didn't trade it in very soon for a used Stevens pump in 20 gauge. One of my younger brothers got a .410 double as a first gun on Christmas morning. He learned a lot from that little double, and it still graces his gun cabinet

and gets a regular cleaning, even if he doesn't take it afield anymore.

First guns are that important. Obviously, an adult looking for a youngster's first sporting gun is on a memorable shopping trip. It's worth taking the time to consider all the choices.

For years, the most popular first shotgun was the single-barrel break-open type with an exposed hammer. It was light and inexpensive, and it wasn't—and still isn't—a bad choice for a younger squirrel hunter, but it has some serious drawbacks for youngsters after other game. In the first place, kids sometimes have trouble mounting the gun and thumbing the hammer back quickly, and any hesitation makes a smooth swing almost impossible. That, in turn, makes learning to wingshoot a very difficult proposition. The only alternative is to cock the gun first, but that is not suitable from a safety standpoint. In the second place, most single barrels are choked very tightly (for reasons I have never understood). Again, that's fine for the

squirrel hunter, but a young wing-shooter with a gun that is both hard for him to cock and tightly choked is laboring under a pair of discouraging disadvantages. Finally, one of the single-barrel's chief virtues, its very light weight, is partially offset by its substantial recoil. If the gun is a .410, then recoil becomes negligible, but virtually all .410's come only in full choke, and they throw considerably less shot than the larger gauges.

However, an undeniable virtue of the single shot is its very low purchase price. The same can be said for bolt-action shotguns, which are fairly rare these days. Of the two, the single shot makes more sense to me, since most bolt-action shotguns have very rough actions that are really no faster than a single shot, and they have the pointing and handling qualities of a shovel. Both single shots and bolt-actions go for around \$75.

It's not easy to find a good double at a reasonable price these days, but it may be worth the search. Many experienced bird hunters like doubles and spend big bucks on them, but the





Page 17: photo by Randy Shank.  
 Opposite page: photo by Roy Edwards.  
 Above: Mossberg and Winchester pump shotguns; photo by Roy Edwards. Guns courtesy of Green Top Sporting Goods.  
 Below right: The single shot type shotgun is a popular first gun for youngsters; photo by Randy Shank.

less expensive models also make wonderful beginners' guns, or just all-around guns. Since they lack the sliding breech mechanism of a pump or semi-auto, they can be about three inches shorter with the same barrel lengths. The reduced length can be important to a young shooter. When double guns are opened, they tell the gun handler (or his parent) immediately if there are shells in the chambers or obstructions in the barrels. Doubles are uncomplicated, reliable, easy to load and unload, have the safety in a logical and prominent place, and offer two shots without having to thumb back any heavy hammers. More expensive models come with single, selective triggers, but I think double triggers might be better for beginners. Chokes usually come improved cylinder and modified, or modified and full; the first

combination is generally much more satisfactory for young shooters.

For many years, the Savage Arms Corporation made the Stevens 311, a sensible, fairly inexpensive double that was ideal as a first gun and just fine as a field gun for older shooters, too. It was not exactly a thing of beauty, when compared to a classic Parker or Smith double or to one of the nicer imports, but it swung fairly well and it seemed to go on working forever. I know a lot of hunters who cut their teeth on a 311, and I also know a few who still hunt with one. You see a lot of them in pickup trucks and lying across stacks of decoys in boats. Savage ceased manufacture of the 311 a year or so ago, which seems a pity, but there are several imports which are very similar. Stoeger imports an IGA double from Brazil, and Interarms imports the Rossi "Squire." Both come in 12, 20, and .410, all with 3-inch chambers. The list prices run from \$300 to \$350, and you might find one for less than that in certain places.

The pump is also a good first gun. It is about as fast for repeat shots as a double or a semi-auto, but since it requires a deliberate motion to shuck the action, it is a little less likely than the semi-auto to tempt the shooter to empty the magazine every time he takes a shot. (Watch a beginner with a new semi-auto at his first good dove shoot. He will shoot behind the bird, then further behind the bird, then *way* behind the bird, all in about 1.5 seconds. Then he will reload. This is an expensive way to learn wing-shooting.) Most American-made pumps are extremely reliable, and they are not expensive guns. Mossberg lists its virtually indestructible 500 pump gun for around \$250, and Winchester has its "Ranger Youth's Model," a version of the popular 1300 for under \$300. Both guns come with screw-in chokes, and they are often discounted to well below the prices listed here. I saw plain-Jane versions of both guns at local discount stores a few days ago, and the prices were around \$180. Neither gun was fancy—no vent ribs, no high-quality walnut in the stock, no fancy finish—but either was a lot of gun for the money. A bargain hunter

with two \$100 bills in his pocket could have walked out the door with a gun, two boxes of dove loads, and a little pocket change. Not bad for the last decade of the twentieth century. Remington has two versions of its classic 870; the one with the hardwood stock and dull finish costs a little more than half the list price of the standard model.

If the shooter is a little older or has enough experience and self-discipline to keep from triple-tapping the trigger every time the gun comes on target, there is nothing wrong with a semi-auto. The chief virtue of the semi-auto is not its firepower (the pump and the double are just as fast for aimed shots), but its light recoil. A gas-operated gun such as the Remington 1100 or the Winchester 1400 in 12 gauge has the apparent recoil of a 20 gauge, and the 20 gauge versions are comfortable enough for even the most recoil-sensitive shooter to enjoy. Semi-autos usually run a little higher than pumps or the least expensive doubles, but Winchester has a less fancy "Ranger" version of the 1400 for about \$350.

What about gauges? Again, that depends partly on the size, build, and desires of the young shooter. I don't think anybody would argue that a boy or a girl needs a magnum 10 gauge or a 3-inch 12 gauge as a first gun, but that doesn't necessarily







## A Comparison Chart

Action Type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Single Action	Inexpensive, light weight	Slow follow-up shots, may be hard to cock
Bolt Action	Inexpensive	Slow follow-up shots, poor handling, rough action
Pump	Can be fairly inexpensive,	No real disadvantages
Double	Very fast repeat shots, prominent safety, easy to inspect and clean, quick handling	Can be hard to find, may be expensive
Semi-auto	Very fast repeat shots, light recoil	Usually more expensive than some others, may tempt beginners to waste shells

*Left: A double-barreled shotgun is a more expensive proposition, but they are easy to inspect from a safety standpoint, uncomplicated and reliable; photo of a Savage Arms Corporation Stevens 311 by Roy Edwards.*

*Opposite page: A single-shot shotgun used to be the most popular choice for a first gun (top right), but many parents are looking hard at semi-automatics (bottom right, Remington 1100 and Winchester 1400) because of their light recoil, repeat shots and reasonable price; photos by Roy Edwards. Guns courtesy of Green Top Sporting Goods.*

mean that smaller is always better. The tiny .410 bore and the 28 gauge have drawbacks, too. (By the way, .410 is not a gauge but a bore measurement; hence the decimal point.) The first is limited mainly by its small maximum load and by the tight chokes usually found in .410's. The second is also limited by size, but more by the scarcity of 28-gauge shells at most country stores.

The .410 is a mixture of virtues and vices—mostly vices, many would say. It is harder to hit with than a larger gun, but it is also very light and virtually lacking in recoil. It doesn't carry much shot (a maximum of 11/16 oz.), but what it does carry is moving at about the same speed as shot out of anything else. If the range is close enough to allow plenty of shot to hit the target, the tiny load is pretty effective. I have seen good shooters, including my brother, dust skeet and drop doves cleanly with a .410, and I even know of a few ducks and at least one goose which have fallen to it, but I still don't think it is an ideal beginner's gun. Its chief virtues are its light weight and lack of recoil, both of which can be encouraging to very young shooters. It is a

demanding little gun to hit with consistently, though, and it lacks versatility. Stretched beyond its limit, it can frustrate the young shooter and wound game.

The 20 gauge comes pretty close to being ideal as a first gun, especially since almost all twenties, except semi-autos, are now made with 3" chambers. Shells for it run all the way from a light 7/8 oz. load (only a little more violent than a .410) all the way up to a 1-1/4 oz. load, which no duck or goose I've ever seen can tell from a 12-gauge field load. The 20 gauge makes a delightful target gun for shirtsleeve fun on a summer afternoon, and it won't intimidate a beginning shooter. It is just about perfect for doves and quail, and it will do nicely for larger birds. It's not perfect as a shotgun for deer, but Federal makes a 3-inch buckshot load carrying 18 pellets of #2 buck, and the 20-gauge slug hits almost as hard (at short range) as a .30-30 bullet. In short, there aren't many things worth doing that can't be done just fine with a 20 gauge, even if the shooter weighs less than a hundred pounds.

Stocks for grownups are likely to be too long for a child. My young

nephew got a 20-gauge Winchester "Ranger Youth's Model" several years ago and used it quite handily on clay target outings and on dove hunts and even a goose hunt. The stock on the pump gun had a short, 13" pull. When Zack outgrew the short stock (which he did, as I remember, sometime between one and four in the afternoon; kids his age grow tall fast), his father replaced it with a full-sized stock. The transplant was accomplished in my living room, and Zack walked out the door and into my wheat field with the gun and proceeded to get his limit of doves. When my own son was a beginning shooter, I had the stock on a nice little 20-gauge double shortened for him, taking off about an inch and a half. Wiley Matthews, who did the surgery, assured me he could put the extra wood back on when the time came and the gun would still look good. Stephen shot a truckload of clay targets and all kinds of game with the gun, including plenty of ducks and one deer, before Wiley replaced the wood for him. Today the only evidence of the surgery is a barely discernible line.

So what is best? Again, so much





depends on the size and needs of your shooter. Still, it would be hard to find fault with a 20 gauge, either a double or a pump, with fairly open chokes. Good pumps are usually much easier to find at reasonable prices than doubles, and they cost less than semi-autos. If the gun has screw-in chokes, put in the improved

cylinder one. If it has a fixed choke, open is usually better than tight. If you're buying a double, the chokes should be improved cylinder and modified. The youngster will pick up confidence and a smooth swing much faster with the more open chokes, and when he needs tighter constriction he can shoot loads with

granulated filler and hardened shot to close the pattern. For that matter, waterfowl hunting regulations demand steel shot anyway, and steel gives extremely tight patterns with fairly open chokes. If you buy a gun with a short stock to fit the youngster, make sure you can get a replacement stock. Better yet, buy it when you buy the gun. That way you'll have it when you need it. If you have a gun altered, make sure the guy holding the saw is good at what he does. I'd much rather pay a competent gunsmith and have something the young shooter can use and be proud of than take a chance on butchering a stock myself. Keep the piece of cut-off walnut in your gun cabinet, and take it back to the gunsmith when the time comes.

I know many shooters who still have their first guns. The ones who don't often wish they did. It's partly a matter of nostalgia. The guns were tools with which they learned something about the outdoors, and they were also tokens of respect. With their first gun, they have earned the trust of grownups.

The child who is interested in the shooting sports is developing an awareness of the wonderful complexity of the natural world, and of his or her part in it. The gun is an admission ticket to further understanding: to being awake and alive and cold and excited in a duck blind, seeing the sun come up over a mile-wide expanse of water and marsh; to smelling the good, rich smell and savoring the muted colors of November hardwoods; to watching the trembling tautness of a lean white dog on point in a field full of golds and browns. He or she will learn to savor the look and smell and taste of the outdoors, not just in hunting season and not just in regard to hunting. They'll understand that it's worth working hard to save. The kid will outgrow the stock you had shortened, but not the lessons he learned. And that's really what your shopping trip is all about. □

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# Passing The Torch

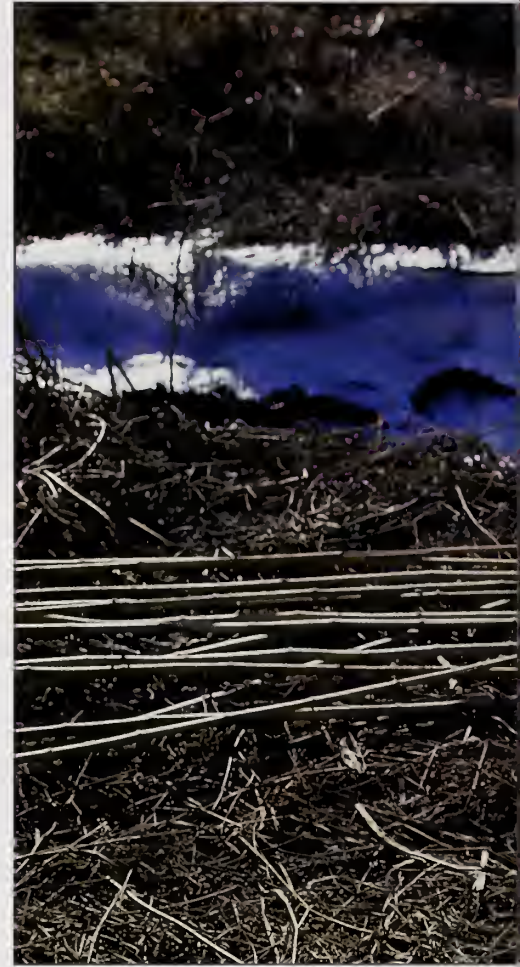
*Keeping the trapping torch alive requires time, commitment, and a love of the outdoors. Nurturing this outdoor heritage means we must also pass the skills along and take the time to teach our children.*

by M. D. Johnson

**M**ost folks can't recall—at least vividly—the time when they were 12 years old. I can. It was 1976, and my folks had a new silver Ford LTD with a paint problem. But it wasn't the paint that made this car memorable—it was the fact that this was the vehicle that my mother used to take me out to Wolfe's Swamp. Still shy of the legal driving age by four long years, I'd crawl into the blanket-covered passenger seat in my baggy Northerner chest waders and nervously sit through the 10-minute eternity to the swamp where, with a kiss from me and a "Be careful" from her, I'd get out to start another day on the trapline. Depending on how much I had to get done in any particular day, it might be dusk be-

fore I saw the twin headlights shine through the yellow quaking aspens and heard the short honk of the horn that announced my ride had returned. Inevitably, it would have been a good day—regardless of what, if anything, the pack basket riding on my shoulders carried. A learning process, courtesy of the swamp and the muskrat, the wood duck and the lowly coot; quite an education for a boy just barely into his double-digit years.

It was an education passed on from father to son. The Number 1 Victor longsprings that currently sat at the base of several dozen muskrat houses, each missing the "point" of the V, had once belonged to my father. Retired long before he saw service in Vietnam during 1965 and '66, the traps had been hauled out of their premature final rusting place in the corner of the garage, and were passed down to me in the summer of '74. With them came a rigorous agenda of classes in outdoor education, wildlife biology, trapline strategies and safety. Soon, the traps began to take on a personality all their own; an identity which taught not only the basics, but instilled qualities such as ethics, respect, appreciation and admiration for that which I would shortly attempt to capture, and all that surrounded them. My father would accompany me whenever his schedule allowed—a schedule that



to this day I'm grateful was extremely flexible.

Today, however, things are quite different. In the rush to go about our everyday business, activities such as trapping and passing the torch oftentimes get pushed into the bottom of a pile of priorities. So how does a young person get into trapping here in the 1990s? Basically, it's little different than when I began, or for that matter, when my father took up the trapline in the early 50s. There is the crucial element, the one that must be present during each and every phase of the process. That element, simply,





# ping Torch



is time. Each step, from outdoor education to the trapline itself and on into pelt preparation and merchandising, requires a certain amount of time. How much time? For this there is no definite answer, only to say that time spent trapping is anything but

*Becoming a successful trapper requires an intimate knowledge of an animal's habitats and considerable skill in setting up a trapline. These are not things which are learned quickly, but require a dedication of time and effort by both a young trapper and his mentor.*

*Opposite: photo by Gregory K. Scott.  
Above and right: photos by Randy Shank.*



minimal. Once an individual can honestly say, "I have the time to trap and am willing to spend the time necessary," a major hurdle has been conquered.

In addition, as much as we might hate to admit, monetary concerns seem to find their way into just about all endeavors, and trapping is no exception. Initially, there are several financial considerations which the new trapper must make before ever stepping foot in the swamp, and even armed with only the barest of essentials, a sizeable check still must be written. To the aspiring muskrat trapper, a dozen #1 longsprings are going to cost approximately \$45, while the same number of the invaluable body gripping traps will set the trapper back \$36.50. If the catch is to be skinned at home, a dozen wire stretchers can be purchased for right around \$15. Add to this figure another \$30 for hip boots, \$10 for wire and a set of side cutters, muskrat lure for \$2.50 an ounce and a bag of bait apples, and it's adios to the better part of \$150. That figure doesn't, however, include a vehicle (or as in my formative years, a chauffeur), gas and a \$30 pack basket in which to place all of this newly-purchased equipment. With such prices, it's easy to understand how the torch might get dropped along the way.

Once the young trapper reaches this point, however, it's now only a matter of locating suitable trapping sites and getting to work. Although sounding rather elemental, the first phase of this next step can sometimes be the most difficult, as landowner permission to trap private lands becomes harder and harder to obtain. Working in the novice's favor, however, is the fact that there are fewer trappers and therefore, a greater number of locations not being trapped. For the beginner, still waters such as marshes, swamps, small ponds and lakes will provide the most productive, educational and non-frustrating introduction to the sport. Sign, such as dens and slides for instance, are much more easily located in these places, and sets can be made in a slow and careful manner.



Trapping is a sport that will last a lifetime and teaches discipline, patience, endurance, and understanding of the life around us.

**Above right:** photo courtesy of the Ohio Division of Wildlife.

**Below right:** photo by Randy Shank.



The first catch, whether it be muskrat, mink or raccoon, may be what seems like a long time in coming, but once it does, a whole different aspect of trapping then slides into view. The skinning process is actually quite an uncomplicated procedure; that is, after it's been done a time or two. As a learning tool, the muskrat holds no equal. In fact, the muskrat is to novice trappers what the squirrel is to the hunter venturing forth for the first time. Several dozen fine books have been written on how to skin, flesh and stretch different furbearing species, and may prove an important source of information. Better yet is a ringside seat at the skinning gambrel of the local fur dealer. Here is an individual from whom can be garnered more outdoor lore than can be poured from a thousand books or magazine articles. Most fur dealers will advertise in local phone directories, or they may

make their services known through talk in the nearby sporting goods or hardware store. Befriending the local fur dealer can not only provide a new trapper with a powerful ally in the field, but at the buyer's table as well.

Becoming a trapper is one thing, passing the torch to someone else is a completely different concept, and just as vital to the future of trapping. Step one, the longest stride, is to find a receptive student. They exist, believe me. They exist literally by the thousands in states such as Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri and right here in Virginia—young people crying for an education and an experience that only trapping and the whole of the outdoors can provide. They're your sons and daughters, and the sons and daughters of the people that surround you every day. That paperboy who tentatively peeked into the garage while you were hanging the day's muskrats and quietly asked

what you were doing—he's a candidate. How about your daughter's friend who queried you on your chest-waders and pack basket? Girls trap too, you know. Ask their folks if they'd mind if their son or daughter helped you, and then let them. Answer their questions and above all, if you see even a spark of interest, lend a fire to it.

One of the easiest and most successful methods of building a trapper is to take your charge with you on the trapline. Those sets by the bridge abutments on Old County Road? Designate those as "theirs." The days pass, other sets connect and miss, but the morning you and your young partner arrive at the bridge to find a muskrat swaying in the current, you'll have on your hands a trapper for life. □

*M.D. Johnson is a freelance writer living in Ohio.*

## More About Trapping

For those who may be interested in learning more about trapping, how to trap and where trapping supplies can be purchased, contact:

Virginia Trappers Association  
Joe Brescia, President,  
2132 Shipyard Rd.,  
Chesapeake, VA 23323  
Phone (804) 487-1766  
or

Randy Colvin,  
16263 Turkey Rd.,  
Gordonsville, VA 22942  
(703) 832-5914

The Virginia Trappers Association is dedicated to preserving our right to trap, promoting ethical trapping, the enhancement of trapper/landowner relations and helping those who wish to learn the sport of trapping. The association hosts several workshops each year and holds an annual convention where demonstrations on all phases of trapping are given. Trapper supply dealers are on hand to sell trapping equipment. Included in the membership dues is a monthly trapping magazine.



## Art For Wildlife

Mill Pond Press in Venice, Florida, announces the release of a special limited edition print of 10,000 by Robert Bateman entitled "White-tailed Deer Through the Birches" to benefit conservation around the world. The 27" X 35" print is available for \$335 from Mill Pond Press at 310 Center Court, Venice Florida 34292-3505; phone: 1-800-237-2233, ext. 99. A percentage of the proceeds from this print will be donated to the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Harmony Foundation, Elk Island Institute, and the World Wildlife Fund. □



"White-tailed Deer Through the Birches" © 1992 Robert Bateman.

## Hunters for the Hungry

A program designed by a group of hunters to provide venison for Virginia's hungry begins its second year of operation this fall. "Hunters for the Hungry" is the brainchild of the members of the non-profit Society of St. Andrew, a Christian hunger ministry located in Big Island, VA. Last year, they provided 33,000 pounds of venison to the hungry in Virginia, all of it donated by Virginia deer hunters.

A 1991 study by the Virginia Congress on Hunger has shown that more than 1,000,000 emergency meals are served to the hungry in Virginia each month, and that nearly

half of all hungry Virginians are children. "Hunters for the Hungry" solicits venison donations from successful hunters, covers the cost of processing, and distributes the meat through charities to these needy people.

Says David Horne, who administers the program: "Hunger is an increasing problem in Virginia and the nation as a whole. Hunters for the Hungry provides an excellent source of food for the needy by utilizing one of our natural resources. With an expanding deer herd and more liberal bag limits, hunters can help the needy as well as doing something positive for the sport of hunting."

With the cooperation of several groups, among them the Virginia Association of Meat Processors, the Federation of Virginia Food Banks, and the Virginia Deer Hunters Association, "Hunters For the Hungry" is looking forward to another season of helping the hungry. If you are interested in participating in this program, contact David Horne, Society of St. Andrew, P.O. Box 329, Big Island, VA 24526, or call 1-800-333-4597. □

## Letters

### The Last Word

My 70-year-old city home is graced with a small but diverse and beautiful garden. Complete with an ornamental pond, it is a little sanctuary for a variety of birds and aquatic creatures.

Sadly, the wildlife in my yard is subject to relentless hunting pressure by a number of domestic free-ranging cats. Despite having fenced in the yard as well as having had discussions with the cat owners—the problem persists.

As a hunter I kill only as much as I intend to eat—and eat what I kill. Not so with these damnable cats—that leave the victims of their instinctual behavior dead, but otherwise

whole and intact. Every spring at least one bird's nest in my yard is ravaged by one of these cats—and the carnage left to rot on the ground. I can't begin to tell you how angry and frustrated I feel every time I discover the damage done by one of these miserable animals.

Just as irresponsible "hunters" that indiscriminately kill protected species outside the limits of both the law and good conscience are subject to prosecution for their crimes, so should irresponsible cat owners be subject to the same. Perhaps, then, people will think more carefully about the responsibility they must accept for the behavior of their pets—not to mention the sanctity of someone else's home and property.

Stephen W. Borgess  
Winchester

The May issue of *Virginia Wildlife* was an exhilarating experience for members of the Virginia Native Plant Society. "Trillions of Trillium" by Nancy Hugo focuses on an alliance between the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS) arising from mutual admiration for the G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area. "The Thompson" is our first site of our VNPS Registry Program and the flora there live up to every word of praise written by Nancy Hugo.

The photographs by Hal Horwitz are as meticulously beautiful as the flowers deserve and are complimented by the Kincheloe illustration of the *Trillium grandiflorum*. The response to your article has been from around the country as people asked for directions to the location and some joined VNPS.

We appreciate the efforts of Bob Duncan, Chief of Wildlife, and of Jim Remington, then Director of DGIF. They made possible the melding of Gary Fleming's inventory of flora for Virginia Natural Heritage, John



Gottschalt's expertise from Audubon Naturalist Society, Jocelyn A. Sladen, Piedmont Chapter member of VNPS and instigator of the idea of a Registry Program. We anticipate a cooperative relationship in management of the flora within the registry site. An early effort will perhaps be posting reminders to *leave* the plants in the Thompson.

A trail manager of the AT, Col. Neil Snyder, has reported the removal of a yellow lady's slipper and a showy orchis. VNPS is absolutely against collecting plants from the wild. With so many in the registry site, it might be hard to realize that we know the plants personally, each new season seeking them where we saw them last year. There is enough disturbance of private property across from the Thompson to disturb the natural balance of flora in the Wildlife Management Area. DGIF has managed the Thompson very effectively to bring us this rich habitat which must continue to be protected and managed to ensure its future. Some of us previously less enthusiastic about deer hunting have a new appreciation of the positive management effect of controlling the size of the herd when we learned what a taste treat the blooms of trillium and orchids are for deer in the spring!

VNPS looks forward to continuing to work with Bob Duncan and the managers of Wildlife Management Areas of DGIF as we learn of more botanically important lands in their care. Excellent management of fauna and flora complement each other as citizens of Virginia will enjoy these areas for years to come. Children of Virginia will be introduced to the areas on walks identifying flowers, listening to birds and wondering which they are and where they come from, hoping to see deer or maybe a turkey in the wild and hopefully will pass on their appreciation and enjoyment as the years roll by.

With appreciation and admiration for Virginia's Department of Game and Inland Fisheries work with wildlife—fauna and flora, I am

Nicky Staunton  
President,

Virginia Native Plant Society



photo by Tim Wright

## A Sporting Christmas Gift

Why not give a Sporting Clays Gift Certificate for Christmas? Give the shotgun enthusiast in your family a certificate for one round of sporting clays at the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' sporting clays range at Amelia Wildlife Management Area located in Amelia County. The 11 clay target shooting stations at the range test the skills of the hunter in various hunting simulated situations, from ducks to quail to doves and rabbits. It's the shooting sport of the 90s and it's great fun!

Send your check for \$20 for an adult gift certificate, or \$10 for a youth (12-15 years) certificate made out to the Treasurer of Virginia and send it to Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Attn: Sporting Clays, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. Note: Reservations are required and will be made on a first-come, first-served basis. Call the Game Department at 804/367-8464 or 804/367-1000 for details. □



# Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

*Project FeederWatch is a North American effort which encourages people to help us learn more about birds—by paying attention to our backyard bird feeders.*

by Erica H. Dunn

It's 7:00 A.M. on a dark, wintry Saturday morning. Instead of sleeping late as any sensible human being should, I'm peering out my kitchen window counting the birds at my feeder. Jotting down species and numbers with one hand, I fumble for the coffeepot with the other. My neighbors' windows are still dark, but I'm comforted to know I'm not alone in my weekend vigil. Nearly 8,000 other dedicated observers all across North America are, like me, participating in Project FeederWatch, a volunteer natural history survey of the numbers and kinds of birds at backyard feeders.

Sponsored by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and Canada's Long Point Bird Observatory, FeederWatch was launched in 1987. Our aim is to learn which species come to feeders, and in what numbers. We are learning *why* birds visit, too, by documenting the habitat and food characteristics that are preferred by each species. At the same time, we follow annual changes in numbers, with a view to discovering why such fluctuations occur.

Over the past four winters, we have recorded 225 bird species sampling our food offerings, even though the average yard is host to fewer than 20 kinds. From a vagrant rustic bunting, a rarity from Siberia at a feeder in Vancouver, to greater roadrunners eating hamburger in Arizona, an amazing variety has been recorded enjoying our largess.

How does the survey work? Volunteers are recruited from the gener-

al bird-feeding public, and anyone who can identify common birds at their feeders is invited to join. We watch our feeders on two consecutive days during each of ten two-week "count periods" from November to April and record information according to detailed instructions sent to each volunteer.

A biannual FeederWatch newsletter features timely summaries of the project's results. The newsletter also carries articles on bird feeding tips, the winter ecology of the species that come to feeders, and noteworthy observations from participants.

FeederWatch combines research and learning in a survey that is also great fun to do, and participants show amazing dedication. One, who missed a count because of a heart attack, wrote to assure the organizers it "wouldn't happen again."

The scientific strength of Project FeederWatch comes from pooling simple observations of thousands of people over a broad geographic area. Individual feeder owners frequently worry when traffic at their fast-food outlets declines. Are bird populations declining? Project FeederWatch data can show whether a widespread change in numbers has really taken

place, or whether the change at a feeder results from local events. FeederWatch alone cannot tell us why bird numbers vary from year to year, but our data are a vital first step to finding out.

If you can identify the common birds at your feeder, why not join us in Project FeederWatch? You needn't be an expert birder, and don't have to watch your feeder every minute on count days.

To take part, send your name and address with your \$14 registration (payable to "Project FeederWatch"), to: Project FeederWatch, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Rm 89, Ithaca, NY, 14850.

Project FeederWatch is both a valuable scientific study and a great deal of fun for participants. What better way for us to find out more about those hardy bundles of bright feathers that bring us so much pleasure during the long winter months?

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*Erica Dunn is the coordinator of Project FeederWatch, as well as an avid participant. As a Ph.D. student studying energy balance in nestling double-crested cormorants, she used to dream of studies that could be conducted out of the rain. With Project FeederWatch she has fulfilled her ambition.*



*Project Feederwatch monitors the birds (like the white-throated sparrow featured above) which use our backyard feeders from November through April; photo by Gary W. Carter.*



# Recipes

By Joan Cone

## Better Than a Cold Shoulder— Venison Pot Roast

Many deer hunters give away the two front legs of their animal, as they feel it is too tough for good eating. They don't know what they are missing! It is true that the meat from the front leg is less tender than that from the hind leg, but it can be used successfully for excellent pot roasts, stews and grinding.

If you use a crockpot for cooking your shoulder roasts, they will always turn out tender and tasty as in the following recipe.

### MENU

*Hot Artichoke Dip*  
*Venison Shoulder Roast in Crockpot*  
*Broccoli-Raisin Salad*  
*Spiced Oranges*  
*Eleanor's Overnight Cookies*

### Hot Artichoke Dip

1/2 cup mayonnaise  
1/2 cup sour cream  
1 can (14 ounces) artichoke hearts,  
drained and chopped  
1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese  
1/8 teaspoon hot pepper sauce

Stir all ingredients until well mixed. Spoon into a small ovenproof

dish. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until bubbly. Serve with rye bread squares, crackers or corn tortilla chips. Makes 2 cups.

### Venison Shoulder Roast in Crockpot

1 to 2-pound boneless venison  
shoulder roast  
1 can (10 3/4 ounces) condensed  
golden mushroom soup  
1 can (4 ounces) sliced mushrooms,  
drained  
1 tablespoon prepared yellow  
mustard  
1/4 cup dry sherry, optional  
1/4 teaspoon ground tumeric  
1/8 teaspoon pepper  
1/2 pound carrots, quartered  
lengthwise and cut into  
2-inch pieces  
1 pound red potatoes, scrubbed and  
cut into 1-inch cubes

Turn crockpot to high heat setting while preparing ingredients. In cooker, mix together soup, drained mushrooms, mustard, sherry, tumeric and pepper. Stir in carrots and potatoes. Nestle roast down in mixture and

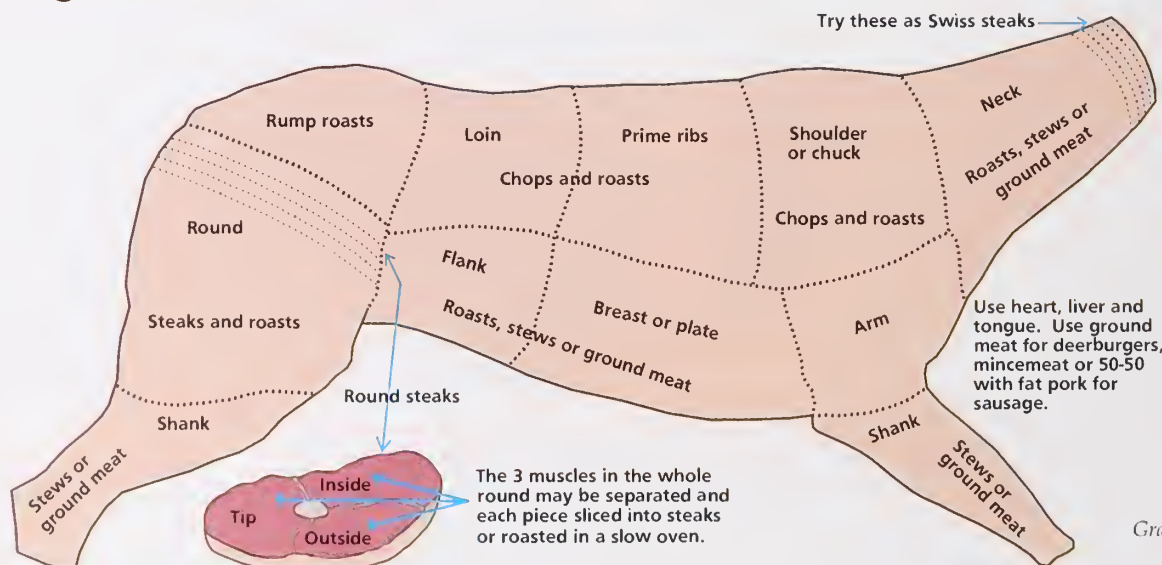
cover with some of sauce and vegetables. Cover and reduce heat to low. Cook 8 to 9 hours. Makes 4 to 5 servings.

### Broccoli-Raisin Salad

1 pound fresh broccoli  
1/3 cup raisins  
2 slices bacon, cooked, crumbled and  
divided  
1 package (3 ounces) cream cheese,  
softened  
2 tablespoons sugar  
2 tablespoons white vinegar  
2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
1 tablespoon prepared yellow  
mustard

Remove broccoli leaves and cut off tough ends of stalks; discard. Wash broccoli thoroughly and cut into 1/2-inch pieces. Combine broccoli, raisins and half of bacon; toss gently. Set aside. Combine cream cheese and remaining ingredients in a blender or food processor and process until smooth. Pour over broccoli mixture, stirring well. Chill 3 hours. Sprinkle with remaining bacon. Makes 6 servings.

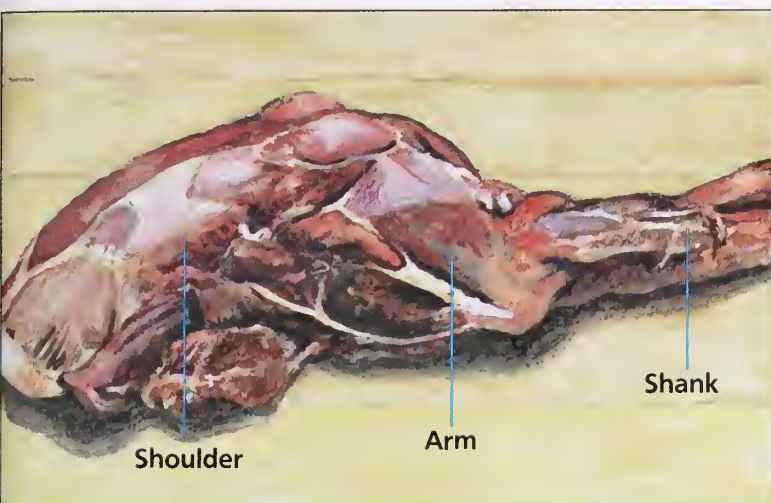
## Diagram of a Deer



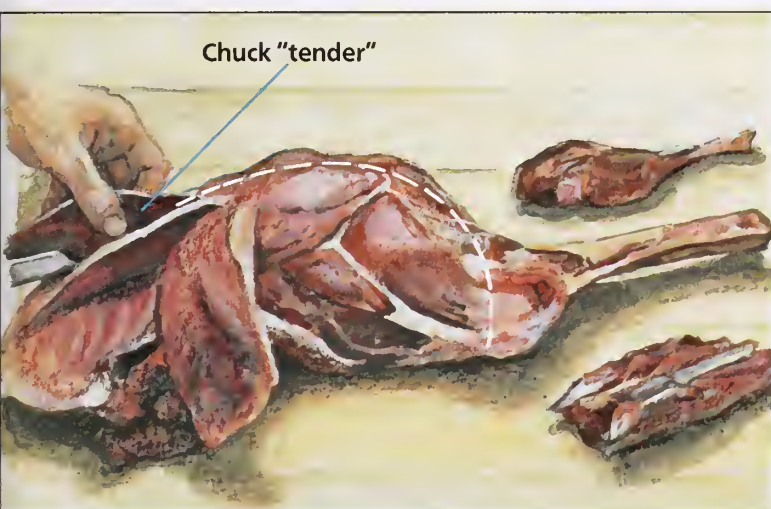
Graphics by Pels.



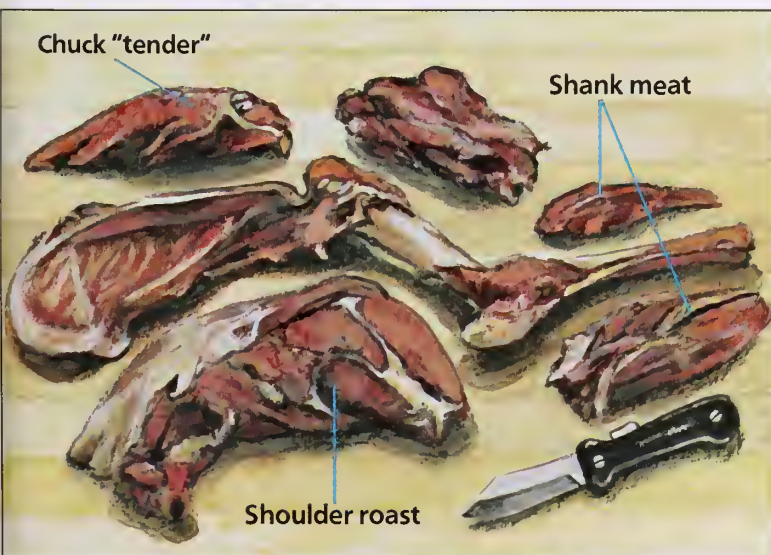
## Front Leg



Unless you are going to cook the entire front leg, be sure to bone it out. The front leg consists of the shoulder, the arm and shank.



If you cut along the bony ridge in the middle of the shoulder blade, one side yields a small, boneless chuck "tender," while the other side gives you a boneless shoulder roast weighing between one and two pounds, or more, depending on the size of your deer.



The chuck "tender," arm and shank sections can be cut into stew meat or ground for burger, while the shoulder roast can be cut into stew meat, made into pot roast, or put into the crockpot.

Illustrations by Brenda Meek.

## Spiced Oranges

- 3 medium oranges, preferably seedless
- 1 lemon
- 2/3 cup water
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 cinnamon stick, broken in half
- 4 whole cloves

Using a small sharp knife or vegetable peeler, cut 2 long strips of peel from orange and 2 long strips of peel from lemon. Cut remaining peel and pith from oranges and discard. Slice oranges crosswise into 1/2-inch thick slices. Arrange slices in a shallow dish. Squeeze 1 tablespoon juice from lemon and reserve. Bring water, sugar, cinnamon, cloves and orange and lemon peel strips to boil in a heavy small saucepan over medium heat, stirring until sugar dissolves. Simmer 3 minutes. Add reserved 1 tablespoon lemon juice to syrup. Pour hot syrup and spices over orange slices. Cover and refrigerate to chill, turning oranges occasionally. Serves 3.

*Note:* This recipe can be doubled.

## Eleanor's Overnight Cookies

Eleanor O'Farrell of Esquel, Argentina is a marvelous cook and this is one of her favorite cookie recipes. Eleanor and her family receive and enjoy *Virginia Wildlife*.

- 4 cups quick-cooking oatmeal
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 2 eggs, beaten or 1-2 cup egg substitute
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 3/4 cup chopped nuts or raisins, optional

Mix together the oatmeal, brown sugar and oil and leave overnight. The next day, add the eggs, vanilla and nuts or raisins. Drop by rounded teaspoonful, molding slightly, onto a greased cookie sheet. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 12 to 15 minutes, until slightly browned. Remove immediately from sheet. Makes 6 dozen cookies. □



# Photo TipS

By Lynda Richardson

The car came to a gravel spewing halt. "Oh, honey, look! It's a big deer! Let's get a picture of it!" Car doors opened, slammed, and an older man and his female companion started to walk towards the large buck in the meadow. I watched as another perfect photo opportunity was about to be ruined by inconsiderate passersby. The couple plodded towards the courting eight-point buck and doe I'd been following at a distance for over an hour.

As they got closer, the nervous doe trotted off and with perfect timing the couple moved right into the path of the pursuing buck. Ears shot back and hackles raised as the buck lowered his head preparing for battle with an apparent suitor. I, on the other hand, realized I had a difficult decision to make. Should I keep my mouth shut and get some great shots of these idiots being gored or should I save the deer from making a mess of his antlers? Hmmm. Hmmm. This was going to be a tough one...

Suddenly, the decision was made for me. The man handed his partner a small pocket camera and turned to place his arm around the buck's swollen neck! I just couldn't stand it any longer. "What ARE you doing?" I screamed louder than I'd planned. "I wouldn't get between that buck and his doe if I were you!" The man put down his arm and looked for the voice on the hillside. He thought about it for a few seconds, said something to the woman, and slowly backed away. As soon as they had given him some distance, the buck hurried off to continue his romancing of the distant doe. After glancing back at me once or twice, the couple piled into their car and left me alone in a swirl of gravel.

When choosing to photograph wildlife or anything else for that matter, try and remember to follow some

## A Hackle Free Existence

simple rules of common courtesy. I can't tell you how many times I've been off in a corner of some woods somewhere, having gotten up at 3:00 a.m. and traveled hours to get to the site, then waited another several hours in a blind, just to have someone come knocking: "What'cha doing in there? Have you seen those big turkeys that live around here?"

Whenever you see another person photographing or using a photo blind, please be considerate and steer clear. Just because he or she is using a long (or short) lens doesn't mean the subject can't be spooked. Besides, the photographer was there first and if you want to photograph the same subject, you'll just have to be patient and wait your turn at a distance. Don't let your enthusiasm ruin a good photo opportunity for someone else. That's one of the reasons we have so many rules for photographers in our state and national parks.

It's important for us all to show a little consideration for others. No matter what the subject, never interrupt a photographer or purposefully interfere. One time in a national park in Florida, an inconsiderate man

walked between me and my subject. When I protested, he retorted that I was wasting my time on "just a duck."

Resist the urge to strike up a conversation with a photographer when you see they're shooting. They will thank you for it. For me, it takes all the concentration I can muster to remember settings and anticipate animal movements and compositional changes. An interruption is NOT what I need at this time, though I'd be glad to talk when I'm through.

When in a car, try not to stop near someone photographing. I would recommend waiting at a distance before you get to them and then watching for a signal that it's O.K. to pass. If you must continue on, pass slowly. If you must stop, NEVER get out of the car to see what's going on. Many animals will tolerate an automobile, but once a door opens and a person appears, it's good-bye subject!

Photography is an increasing pastime for millions of people. By using common sense and thoughtful consideration for your fellow photographers, you, too can enjoy a hackle-free photographic experience. □



*These photographers (all friends of mine) knew how to cooperatively work together. Everyone was able to get the shot they wanted without spooking the subject (Right to left, Bob Coles, Bill Lane, Jim Lindsay and Annie Denton); photo by Lynda Richardson.*





## Fire on Board

by Col. William Antozzi, Boating Safety Officer

Suddenly there is an explosion and flames leap upward, threatening life and property. The fire extinguishers are the very first things which come to mind at a time like that. If they have been neglected and fail to function, the persons on board are in a desperate situation. Extinguishers which have no propellant are not only useless, they provide a false sense of security because there they are, with their red paint shining, providing a promise which can not be fulfilled.

Every boat operator hopes that there will never be a fire on board. Each skipper regards his fire extinguishers as dependable friends which will protect him if needed, but many boaters are prone to assume too much. Hopes will not extinguish fires. Functional extinguishers just might.

The U. S. Coast Guard requires fire extinguishers if a vessel has any closed compartments or other closed spaces in which combustibles *can* be stored. The number and size of the extinguishers to be carried varies with the size of the craft. Outboard motorboats less than 26 feet in length which have no closed compartments or other spaces which can be closed are not required to carry fire extinguishers, but they are recommended. All other motorboats must be equipped with fire extinguishers. Boats having permanently installed fuel tanks are also required to carry fire extinguishers.

Extinguishers on boats are required to be capable of putting out

class "B" and "C" fires which are fires involving flammable liquids, grease and electricity. Most used on pleasure boats carry the B-C classification because that is what the Coast Guard requires. They can be foam, carbon dioxide, dry chemical, or freon (halon) All fire extinguishers must show approval of the U.S. Coast Guard or the Department of Transportation (DOT).

Extinguishers should be located some distance from the possible

source of fires such as engine compartments or hatches. Frequent checks must be made to insure that they are in their stowage brackets and undamaged. Nozzles should be free of obstructions. Pressure gauges should show proper prescribed pressure. They should never be tried merely to ascertain that they work, because the valves will not reseal properly and the propellant gas will leak out.

It is wise to have more extinguishers than required. The typical 2 1/2 pound dry chemical extinguisher will discharge its full load in about 10 seconds. When that is gone and the fire is not out, it will be great to have several more at hand.

Fire extinguishers should be mounted where they can be easily spotted when needed. The extinguishing agent should be aimed at the *base* of the fire.

The most popular models are rated as 5 - B:C. The "5" designates the size fire it will extinguish. For just a few dollars more, a 10 - B:C can be purchased which is twice as effective. Of course a 20 - B:C is even better, but heavier.

Halon extinguishers are great for engine compartments. They can be mounted so that in the event of fire, their gas will smother the fire. Their size depends upon the cubic feet of the hatch to be protected.

Water should never be poured on a grease or electrical fire. The water may simply spread the grease and conduct electricity. □



photo by Gary W. Carter



By Spike Knuth

## November-The Reminder Month

November can be a month of contrasts in Virginia. It's still not winter, but it can be cold and miserable. It's the middle part of what we call fall, but it often gets warm enough to fool forsythia, japonica and even cherry trees into blooming.

Most hunters finally get their long-anticipated chance to go afield in November with the opening of deer, turkey, quail, rabbit, and grouse hunting seasons. Anglers too, benefit from a flurry of feeding action as fish prepare for a short season of relative inactivity. It's a month when resident wildlife are preparing to survive winter and when northern breeding migrants are hightailing it south to warmer climes on the breath of Arctic winds.

Wildlife watchers can look for the first influx of twinkling, flashing flocks of juncos to Virginia. To many, they are known as snowbirds, because they seem to arrive just in advance of the first snowy weather.

The first week of November also usually sees the first major appearances of open-water waterfowl such as goldeneyes, buffleheads, mergansers, scaups, canvasbacks, scoters and oldsquaws. Arctic breeding Canada geese, snow geese and tundra swans make their initial appearances in Virginia about this time. New arrivals are those flocks coming in at great heights, possibly even riding the lower edges of the jet stream.

In the flat croplands of Northern Neck and tidewater, look for kestrels, meadowlarks and northern harriers. Low-flying harriers—formerly known as marsh hawks—tack back and forth over grassy fields, scanning for rodents. The dark brown females with white rump patches are larger than the grayish males.

Veteran's Day (November 11), and the days on either side of it, are often a period of stormy weather. On Armistice Day, 1940, as many as 80 duck hunters died in the Midwest when Gulf air collided with a mas-

night when I belatedly flipped on the backyard floodlight which served as a nightlight. It shone directly on that clump of leaves, apparently keeping the photosynthesis process operating a little longer than normal.

There's more to see in November. Like the kingfisher I saw one year, flying in low, tight circles over Bear Creek Lake in Cumberland as many as five or six times before plunging into the water to catch a fish it had been monitoring. In southeastern Virginia, look for gulls, crows and grackles feeding side by side in a harvested peanut field gleaning leftovers. On the mudflats along the coasts and tidal rivers, look for dunlins in a different plumage than they had in spring when they are called red-backed sandpipers.

November is a time to marvel at the productivity of the land when you pick up your sweet potatoes from a Virginia Beach farmer. It's also a time of turkeys and Thanksgiving, a time to be thankful for living in a country made great mainly by its physical blessings. A shovelful of Iowa dirt will grow more than many square miles of North African desert! It's been said that the world could probably be fed on what we could grow on our median strips! Even with the tremendous abuse we continue to inflict upon it, our land is still the richest in the world.

November is a time to take time to be thankful; thankful for the privilege to travel freely across boundaries marked only on a map or by a welcome sign; thankful for the privilege of being able to hunt, fish, boat and enjoy our amazing outdoors in the ways available to us. November should be a reminder to us to be thankful for what we have. □



*Snow geese appear in Virginia around November; photo by Shirley M. Glascock.*

sive Arctic cold front. Balmy weather turned nasty and rainy, then it turned to sleet and finally to snow. Straight-away winds of 80 mile per hour were recorded. LaCrosse, Wisconsin on the Mississippi River recorded an all-time low barometric pressure of 28.73! Temperatures dropped from the 70s to the teens in hours. Lake Michigan had 30 foot seas and took 65 lives alone! About the same day over 30 years later, the coal and iron ship *Edmund Fitzgerald*, went down in a similar storm on Lake Superior.

By the third week of November, most leaf color is gone as cold rains and wind bring them down. Sweet gum is one tree that goes through a wide array of color changes—yellow, orange, red and purple. One November, I noticed a clump of my backyard sweetgum was going through its sequence of color changes considerably later than the rest of the three.

The "mystery" was solved one



# Virginia Wildlife Gift Catalog

## Virginia Duck Stamp Print

**H**elp wildlife and make a valuable investment at the same time... buy a 1992 Virginia Duck Stamp Print!

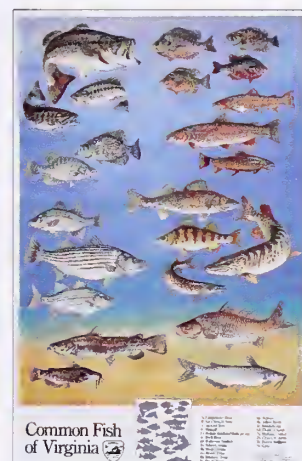
Funds generated from the sale of this year's Virginia Waterfowl Conservation stamp and print, "Buffleheads at Jamestown" by Carl "Spike" Knuth, will be used for the conservation of waterfowl in Virginia. This limited edition print is available from fine art galleries around the state or by contacting Sport'en Art in Sullivan, IL at 1-800-382-5723. Size: 12" X 14"



Endangered species poster



Virginia Wildlife posters



Freshwater game fish poster

**O**der any of the five full-color posters featured on this page (barred owl, white-tailed deer, wood duck, fish identification, or Endangered Species) for \$8 each. Just send your check made out to the

Treasurer of Virginia and specify the number and kind of posters ordered to: Virginia Wildlife, Poster Offer, VDGIF, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104.

### Poster Specifications:

Endangered Species poster: 18" X 24"

Freshwater game fish poster: 21" X 36"

Virginia Wildlife posters: 19 1/2" X 27 1/2"

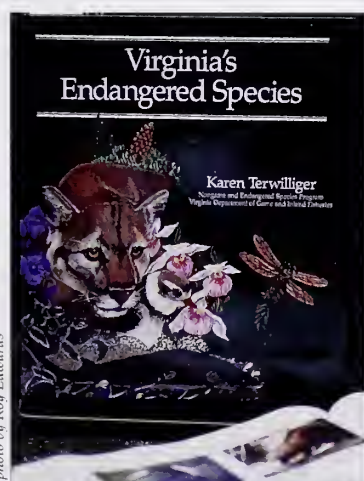


photo by Roy Edwards

## Virginia's Endangered Species

Produced by VDGIF along with other state resource agencies, this 675-page book with 229 color plates, 331 black and white figures, two appendices and three indices is the definitive guide for the nature lover in your family wanting to know about Virginia's rare plants, fish, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, invertebrates, and birds.

Available for \$32.95 (softcover) or \$59.95 (hardcover) plus 4.5 percent sales tax and \$2.50 shipping and handling charges (per book) from: McDonald and Woodward Publishing Company, P.O. Box 10308, Blacksburg, VA 24062-0308. Phone: 703/951-9465.



### Give Wildlife A Ride

Why not show your concern for wildlife by ordering a Wildlife Conservationist license plate from the Department of Motor Vehicles? Created by VDGIF, this plate is designed to generate money for the Game Protection Fund, which is used for wildlife conservation management and research. Write to: DMV, Vehicle Services, P.O. Box 26309, Richmond, VA 23260-6309 for application and ordering information.



# Preserving in bronze what we're losing in the wild

## An Endangered Species Series by Turner Sculpture

**C**apturing the essence of Virginia's endangered species in bronze, David Turner of Turner Sculpture has just completed the second in his limited edition series to raise funds for Virginia's Nongame and Endangered Species Program.

This time, David has turned his artist's eye toward one of Virginia's rarest mammals, the Northern flying squirrel. An elusive, elf-like spirit of our mountaintop spruce forests, this tiny squirrel weighs no more than five ounces and is known only to three locations in Virginia. Strictly nocturnal, it emerges from its nest of shredded bark, lichens, and moss once darkness has fallen and glides silently from tree to tree, its outstretched feet unfurling the parachute-like flaps of skin attached to each wrist and ankle.

Here, David Turner's 7" high sculpture of a Northern flying squirrel is poised for flight on an old-growth snag covered with the lichens and bracket fungus which make up a large part of its diet.

Like the bronze sculpture of the Bewick's wren also featured on this page (less than 100 are left for sale), a limited edition of 200 Northern flying squirrels will be cast and sold solely to benefit Virginia's Nongame and Endangered Species Program, the program responsible for the management and protection of all the Commonwealth's rare and endangered wildlife. The money raised from the sale of these two sculptures will provide the program with over 1/10th of its present operating budget.

Each sculpture has a purchase price of \$325. Turner Sculpture will receive \$175 to cover their production costs, while the remaining \$150 will be sent to the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries as your contribution to Virginia's Nongame and Endangered Species Fund. A tax advisor should be consulted regarding the personal tax deductibility of this contribution.

Each piece sold will include a certificate of origin and a letter confirming your contribution to the future of Virginia's wildlife.

You may order either the Northern flying squirrel or the Bewick's wren by sending a \$325 check for each signed and numbered sculpture to: Turner Sculpture, Box 128, Onley VA 23418. For credit card orders, call: 804/787-2818. Orders received by December 15 will arrive in time for Christmas.

**Note:** If you have already purchased a Bewick's wren and would like the same limited edition number in the Northern flying squirrel edition, please send in your order as soon as possible.



Bewick's wren by David Turner



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# Give Virginia Wildlife



photo by Roy Edwards



photo by Larry Ditto, graphics by Pels

## **Virginia Wildlife Library**

Keep all the useful material you've found in *Virginia Wildlife* at your fingertips. For just \$5 more than a subscription to the magazine, you can get your very own permanent edition of a whole year's worth of *Virginia Wildlife*. Order any volume of *Virginia Wildlife* from 1985, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1990, or 1991 and keep your magazines forever! Send your \$15 check made payable to the Treasurer of Virginia for each volume ordered to: Virginia Wildlife, Attn: Diane Davis, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104.



# ***Bring Home A Little***

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***3) Buy 5 or more subscriptions to Virginia  
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***4) Buy 10 or more subscriptions to Virginia  
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*See gray card in this magazine for order  
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urer of Virginia to: Virginia Wildlife, P.O.  
Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104.*

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